



Sister Souljah

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I never said I was an angel. Nor am I innocent or holy like the Virgin Mary. What I am is natural and serious and as sensitive as an open nerve on an ice cube. I'm a young black sister with an unselfish heart who overdosed on love long ago. My closest friends consider me soft-spoken. Others say I have a deadly tongue. And while it's true that I have a spicy attitude like most of the ghetto girls I know, I back it up with a quick, precise, and knowledgeable mind. My memory runs way back and I'm inclined to remind people of the things they'd most like to forget. No disrespect

Souljah was not born to make white people feel comfortable

I am African first, I am Black first

I want what's good for me and my people first

And if my survival means your total destruction, then so be it

You built this wicked system

They say two wrongs don't make a right

But it damn sure makes things even

The Hate That Hate Produced

— No Disrespect

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Quick Facts

- * Born in 1964
- * African-American novelist, activist, and hip-hop artist
- * Author of *No Disrespect*

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Sister Souljah

Biography

Sister Soujah (Lisa Williamson) was born in 1964 in the Bronx, New York. Her mother, who lived on and off the welfare system for approximately 15 years, raised her. She lived in government subsidized housing below the poverty line, a cycle of poverty from which she later broke out. She supplemented the education she received in what she calls the white American School system by reading African history, which she felt was purposely left out of the school curriculum. By doing so, she feels she was able to become the well-balanced, reassured woman that she is. While in high school, she was Legislative intern in the House of Representatives for the Republican Party. A winner of the American Legion's Constitutional Oratory Contest, she attended Cornell University's advanced placement summer program and the University of Salamanca's study-abroad program in Spain. She later majored in American History and African studies at Rutgers University, where she was a well-known writer and political commentator for the university's newspaper.

In the mid 1980s, while attending Rutgers University, she was offered a job by Reverend Benjamin Chavis of The United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, which is a church-sponsored civil rights group. She developed, organized, and financed, through hip-hop music, a sleep-away summer camp called the African Survival Camp, located in Enfield, North Carolina, for homeless families. The program lasted 3 years.

As a political activist, Sister Souljah is angered by the condition of African American people throughout the entire world. Culturally, she claims the so-called public education system has systematically denied people the right to study and enjoy their culture and history. Politically, she contends African Americans are not included in any substantive, comprehensive agenda around economic development, foreign policy, budget containment or social policy. She believes that African Americans do not hold the capital to gain equitable economic power to break the vicious cycle of discrimination and racism that goes on in our country. She reflects these feelings in her writing and in her songs. She feels it is her responsibility to help correct those wrongs.



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Sister Souljah is a strong, educated, opinionated black woman who is at times seen as a threat to those that deny but are fully aware of the conditions oppressing people of color. In fact, she was the target of that when, in an interview with the *Washington Post*, she made remarks that some believe advocate violence against whites. Sister Souljah's response was, "The context in which my statements were made in the Washington Post was this, and I paraphrase speaking in the mind-set and in the mind of a gang member: Were you surprised at what happened in L.A.? No. I was not. White people should not have been surprised either; they knew that black people were dying everyday in the streets of Los Angeles to gang violence created by poverty and social chaos, but they did not care. If young black man in L.A. would kill their kind, their own brothers and sisters, what would make white people think they wouldn't kill them too? Do white people think they're better, or is it that white death means so much more then Black Death?"

Sister Souljah is also a humanitarian. In Zimbabwe she worked at a medical center and also visited Mozambiquan refugee camps and traveled throughout the South African region. She was also a notable speaker at the Million Women march in Philadelphia. Her travels and lectures have taken her all over America, Europe, and Africa. Currently, she is Executive Director of Daddy's House Social Programs, established by rap artist Sean Puffy Combs' non-profit company for children. This program serves 600 children from ages 6 to 16 from the streets of New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia. The goal of Daddy's House is to help children who have been mistreated by society, through helping them gain confidence and to see themselves as powerful individuals. Sister Souljah also educates teens about womanhood, manhood, and teen pregnancy, and she teaches current events and history. She felt this was a way of giving back to the community in which she lived.

In her first book, *No Disrespect*, Sister Souljah writes very candidly about the struggles of young black women growing up in a complex world, surviving the obstacles of urban life and still being able to maintain their integrity. It is also about women striving for sexual identity and freedom that confronts every African-American--especially women. She accomplishes this by using her own life experiences as a base for this book. Sister Souljah's language is bold and some consider vulgar, but necessary for the subject of this text. She felt writing on this subject was necessary for the development of African females in America, so she could influence their thought process in a positive manner.

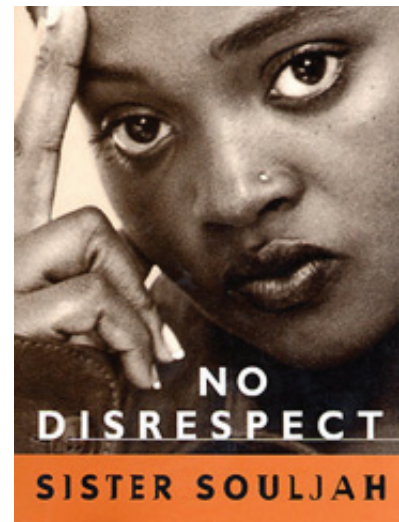


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She expresses these feelings in her book by describing, “the ghetto girl whom nobody ever tells them the definition of womanhood or manhood for that matter.” Her voice has been spread throughout the black community as she is considered a solid thinker who aggressively expresses justifiable anger and hostility about the unfair practices in America toward Afro-American people. In *No Disrespect*, she sets the record straight on where she stands on life, love, spirituality and race, concluding her book with a message for the reader to think about: “Listen Up! Straighten It Out!”

Sister Souljah further displays her brilliant writing style in her second novel, *The Coldest Winter Ever*. The language, the setting, and the characters leaves one to question the depth of one’s consciousness. The tone was graphic and shocking yet intentional and deliberate -- fiction, indeed, but the realism should not go unnoticed. In comparison to writer Toni Morrison, who replicates history through storytelling in her novels, Sister Souljah is fueled by the anger she feels by the the injustices done to Black people in history. “Yes, I am angry, which means that I am sane. Only an undereducated and misguided African person would not be angry at the racist White transgressions of this society.” The setting is in Brooklyn, New York, where she tells the life and demise of a “kingpen” drug dealer and the accepting attitude of a culture surviving yet birthing their own destruction. The story was surreal and the characters were accurately depicted. She takes the reader to a culture maybe unfamiliar yet accessible and understandable through the events and personalities of the characters in the book. The emotions she elicits are thought-provoking enough to generate “change,” which is ultimately her goal.





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Biography continued

Sister Souljah as a hip-hop artist incorporated her views of black injustices in her music. Her 1992 rap album, *360 Degrees of Power*, is a combination of all her thoughts, personal, and professional experience. She states, “Any person who purchases my album will have a full understanding of what I think and believe, although it was designed specifically with the African community in mind.” Her video, “Final Solution: Slavery’s Back in Effect,” brought her national attention for its candor:

If your white great-great grandfather killed my great-great grandfather,
And your white great grandfather sold my great grandfather,
And your grandfather raped my grandmother,
And your father stole, cheated, lied and robbed my father,
What kind of fool would I have to be to say “Come my friend” to the
White daughter and son.

Many criticized her for her graphic lyrics, claiming that her words perpetuate hate among the races, but she feels that the hatred lies not within words, but in a place far deeper. She writes: “At the root of our confusion . . . is a mental function with or without our permission, on both a conscious and subconscious level. We don’t discuss this problem though. It is a problem rooted in a forbidden topic. The forbidden topic is, shh, slavery and the behavioral, mental, spiritual, and money problems it caused. You know the little episode in history that lasted only five and half centuries, which means only five hundred and fifty years. This represents only twenty generations of black folks.” In her songs and writing, she reflects how the effects of slavery still plague the African-American. It is like a wound that never heals and an image that can never be forgotten. Sister Souljah has decided to go against the majority and dedicate her life to seeking a solution to these problems. Her struggle is not lost; in fact it’s only the beginning, for “One Must Return To The Past To Go Forward.”



Sister Souljah

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